

**FEASIBILITY STATEMENTS FOR SNOWSHOE HARE
MANAGEMENT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES
1985 – 1990**

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1985*

Goal: Increase snowshoe hare population in WMUs 7 and 8 and southern 4 and allow population to fluctuate in the remainder of the State.

Abundance Objective: To increase habitat quality by 10% in WMUs 7 and 8 and southern 4 by 1990 to provide for increase in hare abundance (and allow to continue to increase if reached before end of time period; and allow habitat quality and hare populations to fluctuate in remainder of the State.

Harvest Objective: To increase hunter use by 10% in under-utilized areas (WMUs 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6) by 1988 (and continue to increase if level is reached).

Desirability: The abundance objectives would be desirable to snowshoe hare hunters in WMUs 4, 7, and 8. The additional funding may be viewed as undesirable by those who would not directly benefit.

The greatest true benefit offered by the harvest objective is improved hunter success and satisfaction for those that take advantage of the announcements of the high abundance areas. It would be viewed as undesirable to hunters in WMUs 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 that perceive additional competition from nonlocal hunters as a result of announcements of high population areas.

Feasibility: Accomplishment of the abundance objective will be difficult in the 5-year planning period. Efforts to increase the hare population through increasing habitat quality in WMUs 7, 8, and southern 4 by 10% will require extensive habitat management effort, affecting over 400,000 acres. Treatment of such a large area is unlikely by 1990. Furthermore, a period of 6-10 years of growth is necessary after new cuts to obtain prime hare habitat.

The harvest objective can be accomplished if a public information program were implemented to promote under-utilized areas with high hare populations and/or bag limits were liberalized to increase the reward for traveling to these more remote areas.

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Capability of Habitat: The quality of habitat in WMUs 4, 7, and 8 is low and capable of an improvement of 10% over its present quality of hare habitat.

The habitat is capable of supporting an increase in hunter use of more than 10%.

Possible Consequences: Any changes in habitat will affect all wildlife species in these units. Any adverse affects on other major game species such as white-tailed deer would detract from the positive effects. Natural population declines may undermine effort to gain credibility and cooperation due to a lack of understanding of hare population cycles.

Predictable natural population declines in areas of high hare abundance subsequent to announcement may be perceived by local hunters as being caused by the increased hunting pressure.

There will be legislative resistance to increasing bag limits in northern Maine.